

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

2014 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: FoodCorps, Inc.

Program Name: FoodCorps: A School Garden and Farm to School Program

Application ID: 14ED158033

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of the application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory. Comments are not representative of all of the information used in the final funding decision.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

Strengths:

The applicant provides compelling data for three of the fifteen areas (Mississippi, Arizona and Boston MA) in which it will operate, citing statistics from reliable sources such as the RWJF and the Massachusetts Department of Health.

The applicant creates a compelling documentation from diverse professional and respected resources (the Centers for Disease Control for example) of the relationship of obesity to health and of obesity to poverty and ethnicity.

The applicant identified target areas with significant need of intervention that will combat childhood obesity and supports the decision with local and relevant childhood obesity data.

The applicant provides a thorough explanation for why the children in the target areas need knowledge, engagement, and access to a healthier lifestyle. For example, less than 5% of children eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day.

The applicant provides sufficient data discussing U.S. obesity rates and the relationship between poverty and obesity.

The applicant demonstrates a connection between the free lunch program, school meals, and obesity to support a need for this type of project.

The applicant states that its Members are an effective means to solve the obesity problem because they conduct interventions that school administrators could not accomplish without them due to time constraints and lack of expertise.

The applicant is using an evidence-based approach that has seen documented success in other states.

Partnerships in every site will include state level policy and decision makers with the goal of influencing child health programming and school lunch menus.

The host sites are community based organizations that provide funding for the AmeriCorps members, leveraging resources and introducing the AmeriCorps program to businesses and community members.

The applicant demonstrates effective use of AmeriCorps members in the proposed project, including their role in planning, implementing and evaluating program activities.

The applicant's described inputs, outputs and outcomes are logically presented and aligned throughout the logic model and narrative.

The applicant presents reputable data from multiple sources supporting the proposed multi-layered implementation strategy as a promising project for addressing obesity.

The applicant has evaluated its own past performance via a variety of pre- and post-test surveys called Student Attitude Survey and Landscape Assessment. It found positive results.

The applicant used an outside evaluator (the University of North Carolina) and a validated survey (The Fruit and Vegetable Neophobia Instrument) to get positive results.

The applicant exceeded its target in 2011-2012 by providing 51,542 students with lessons on healthy eating and 67,584 students in 2012- 2013. Target goals were 50,000 and 52,000 students respectively.

The applicant reported that, of 6,511 children, 3,034 (close to 50%) demonstrated a willingness to try new food while noting that previous research showed that 40% was a reasonable estimate.

The applicant has a plan of correction to address concerns of Members about cumbersome reporting requirements.

In previous funding cycles with AmeriCorps programming, the applicant has exceeded its goals. For example, in the inaugural year the goal was to serve 50,000 students but the program reached 51,542; the program worked in 255 schools, an increase of its goal of 200; and last year the goal was to reach 52,000 students and the actual number was 67,584.

The applicant demonstrates adequate experience addressing the identified problem of childhood obesity through the strategies indicated in the proposal.

The applicant provides promising data supporting positive attitude changes (46% of those surveyed) based on the presented educational approach.

Weaknesses:

There is no specific data on obesity for the other 12 areas described in the application. Therefore, the need in these areas cannot be determined.

The applicant did not provide data for 8 of the 11 states it will serve.

The applicant provides limited data supporting need for services in the proposed services areas; they propose to serve 14 states through the project but only provide relevant obesity data for 3 states and do not include free lunch program rates for the planned service communities to support the poverty descriptor.

The applicant describes one program as being quasi-experimental, but does not provide details on statistical significance and matched groups so that the reviewer could see if the study was indeed quasi-experimental.

The applicant does not include information for dosage and duration for the engagement and access components of the logic model.

The applicant is vague in reporting how they have conducted their research to evaluate their program. For example, the Applicant does not state how many participants participated in the evaluation process nor describe the similarities and difference of evaluative participants.

The applicant has implemented this program for 2 years but offers limited concrete data to support the effectiveness of the program as implemented based in their three pillars. For example, presented evidence doesn't consistently discuss baseline information, or measurable goals to strengthen an argument of significant impact for the proposed project model.

The applicant reported that it did not reach its goal of 4,800 children who demonstrated a willingness to try new food.

The applicant didn't meet service deliverables in previous years for the 10 hours education component of the program.